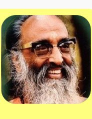
Patrika
Chinmaya Mission Los Angeles
FEBRUARY 2016



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Upcoming Events

Valmiki Ramayana Discourse Series by Swami Ishwarananda	Mar 1 - Mar 4	6:30 am - 7:30 am 7:30 pm - 8:30 pm
Shiva Lakshaarchana by Teachers & Satellite Centers	Mar 5	8:30 am - 10:30 am
Shiva Lakshaarchana by Rameshwaram R1 & R2	Mar 6	9:00 am - 12:00 pm
Mahashivaratri Celebrations *See website for details*	Mar 7	
Stotradhaara Testing	Mar 12	8:30 am - 12:00 pm
Santiago Peak Hike *Click here to register*	Mar 19	7:00 am - 5:00 pm
Annual CORD Walkathon	Mar 20	9:00 am - 11:00 am
Holi Picnic	Mar 20	10:00 am - 3:00 pm
Sri Rama Navami Celebrations	Apr 7-15	
Bhagavad Geeta Chanting Competition	Apr 23	8:30 am - 2:30 pm
India Fest Celebration	Apr 23	5:00 pm - 8:00 pm
Bhagavad Gita Discourse Series by Swami Ishwarananda	Every Sunday	9:00 am - 10:15 am 12:00 pm - 1:15 pm
Bhaja Govindam Discourse Series by Acharya Mahadevan	Every Sunday	9:00 am - 10:15 am 12:00 pm - 1:15 pm
Guided Vedic Chanting by Swami Ishwarananda	Every Saturday	6:30 am - 7:30 am

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Thus Spake The Master

Visions in meditation are enjoyable, no doubt, but they are obstacles.

- Swami Chinmayananda

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Words Of The Wise

Peace is always present, but we ourselves create the disturbances - agitation, distraction and restlessness… then we lose that peace.

- Swami Tejomayananda

TOP

THINK!

Facets of the Immaculate

That which has no hunger, misery or thirst
delusion, waning or even the final exit
Staying faultless, unknown even to the intellect
Heart of Yogi ever focused on that
Meditates with no senses to support
As Thy own very Self within you Meditate

- Swami Ishwarananda
for e-Satsang blog, click here

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FOR THE RECORD

"Where Art Thou ?!"



TOP

Reverence and Joy at the Arrival of Chinmaya Jyoti

CMLA members stood under the open skies of Orange County on Jan 31, unfazed by the light drizzle. They were waiting for the arrival of the Chinmaya Jyoti at CMLA, and the rain seemed like the blessings of the Guru being showered from the skies above.

Un-dampened enthusiasm marked the reverential welcome that was accorded to the Jyoti that was brought in by CM Bakersfield led by Swami Siddhananda, visiting from PA. Chants of 'Om Sri Chinmaya Sadgurave Namah,' rent the air as Swami Ishwarananda and all the devotees followed the procession led by Acharya Mahadevan carrying the Jyoti and the specially-designed palanquin with the Guru Padukas and Gurudev's picture.

At the entrance of the Annakshetra, a formal welcome was given with the Purna Kumbham. Chanting and the sounds of the blowing conch created an atmosphere of unbridled joy which reached its loud crescendo in the hall inside with the beating of the live dhol and the adults doing a lively dandiya.

After this the procession proceeded through the corridors lined with Balavihar children chanting Gurudev's name. The Jyoti was ceremonially placed on the special altar that had been crafted with great thought especially for this purpose.

Swami Siddhananda in his talk, said this had by far been the grandest reception he had seen for Gurudev among all the North America centers where he had been part of the welcome ceremonies. Mahadevanji and Swamiji also addressed the congregation, with the latter explaining the significance of the Jyoti as the light of knowledge. Balavihar children, aware that they had been witness to something momentous, led the pledge and Chinmaya aarati before dispersing to their classes, no doubt to hear more about the glory of Gurudev from their teachers.

The same evening, the series of daily paduka pujas began with long-time members and Gurudev's devotees Dr. D.V.Pillai and his wife Rajeshwari offering their reverence at the feet of the Guru.







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Geeta Jnana Yagna and Meditation Workshop
- By Mayank Bhardwaj

A weeklong Gita Jnana Yagna on Dhyana Yoga held at Rameshwaram from Feb. 20-26 culminating with the highlight event - a meditation workshop on Feb 27, was an experience not to be missed.

Pujya Gurudev Swami Chinmayananda's discourses recorded in 1981 on Chapter 6 of the Bhagavad Gita, "The Yoga of Meditation", was played for 90 minutes every evening. Gurudev in his eloquent style engaged the audience who sat in rapt attention. Gurudev began by expounding on the concept of 'detach and attach,' then moving on to intensive teaching of meditation as a means to establish in the higher state of consciousness and finally Arjuna's conversation with Lord Krishna, which served to further reinforce the power of meditation and its role in a person's spiritual journey.



Gurudev having set the stage, the two-hour meditation workshop that followed, saw a full house of eager attendees. The white attire, soft light and silence added to the serene atmosphere. Swamiji began by explaining the five layers of the human personality. This framework was helpful in understanding the role of meditation as a means to 'detach' from these layers of our personality and 'attach' to the Atman. The presentation moved to the prescribed techniques and the benefits of meditation. Swamiji in his quintessential manner, using illustrations, logic and wit interspersed in between, articulated this subtle topic with great élan.

Having received the instruction, attendees were now ready to light the 'flicker-less flame' by turning the knowledge of meditation into practice. As the lights dimmed and eyelids closed, Swamiji elucidated the breathing and thought-witness processes. Chants of Om, resounding in the beginning then fading to softer notes, transformed Rameshwaram into an ocean of calm.



During the event, Chinmayanjali students sang a lively song based on the Bhagavad Gita, a rendition by Swami Ishwarananda set to the tune of 'Jingle Bells.'

In summary the acronym coined by Swami Ishwarananda, MEDITATION - Mind Engaging Deeply In Total Awareness Transcending Its Own Nature, aptly captured the essence of the jnana yagna.

TOP

Screening of 'On a Quest' Inspires and Touches over 250 Viewers



"Excellent," "Beautiful," "Inspiring," were the oft heard comments from the audience at the CM Rameshwaram auditorium after they had watched 'On a Quest', the biopic on Pujya Gurudev. A movie that kept both the young and old engaged for two hours, it seemed like everyone wanted to linger and talk about it. The over 250 people who came to view it included those who were seeing it for the first time and a large number of repeat audience who came to immerse themselves in the spiritual journey of the great master.

The movie was an emotional journey for many. One member of the audience pointed out that he could truly feel the grace of the Gurudev when watching the biopic. Many expressed how they were able to relate to different moments depicted in the life of Gurudev – especially the part of not understanding what we do in our religious practices.

TOP

CMLA Families Flock to Offer Paduka Puja



The Guru Paduka puja is done as an expression of love, respect and gratitude for the immense knowledge showered on the devotee/student by the Guru. In the 28 days that Rameshwaram was the home for the Chinmaya Jyoti, 52 families conducted pujas! It was the culmination of a year-long program where CMLA members did the puja led by Swamiji or Mahadevanji. During the Jyoti yatra, while some pujas were conducted at the home of CMLA families, others were held at the special altar in the temple at Rameshwaram featuring a life-size picture cut-out of seated Gurudev. Many remarked that they felt Gurudev was truly there smiling at them. All the participating families were given a picture frame of Gurudev and small padukas, as prasad.

TOP

Interfaith Dialog Explores Gurudev's Quote

Over 200 people gathered at Rameshwaram on Feb.15 eager to hear a speakers from eight different faiths speak on Gurudev's saying: "What you have is HIS Gift to you. What you do with what you have is your gift to HIM." A distinguished panel representing Buddhism, Jainism, Zoroastrianism, Islam, Judaism, Sikhism and Hinduism were given ten minutes each to expound on the subject.



The speakers began with an introduction of the origin of their faith. All merged on the tenet that everything that we as humans have, including the world that we live in, is a gift of God. What we do with it came with some variations as the Buddhist Rev. Nichelle Madrid said that service of the known and unknown helps us discover the inner Buddha in us. For Jains, Girish Shah said, it is the principle of non-violence that drives followers to give themselves as gifts to the Lord. Rabbi Frank Stern said, 'Breet' was a seminal concept in Judaism and this covenant with God develops an attitude through which there is realization that if we feel for each other we are in Heaven and if not, we successfully create Hell right here. Maneck Bhujwala also spoke of the Zoroastrian faith's direction to do well for society. Reverend Pastor Paige Eaves spoke of the compelling invitation of Jesus the Christ to his kingdom where everything is available in abundance. Swami Ishwarananda talked of our human birth as being a gift from Him and giving maximum happiness to maximum people for maximum time as our gift to God.

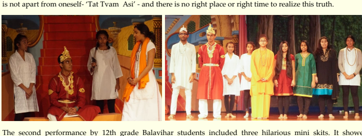
In the Q & A that followed Chaplain Mohamed Khan representing Islam was of the opinion that ISIS and similar groups are gangsters who blasphemize religion. He explained that Prophet Mohammed never killed anyone and believed in non-violence. The Sikh faith was represented by Avinder Chawla

TOP

Youth Medley – Hilarious and Yet, Profound
- By Megha Sharma

The youth of CMLA rocked the stage at Chinmaya Rameshwaram on Feb.21. Asked to take up the theme of 'Guru Mahima,' the 11th, 12th and the CHYK group with detail and thought-through three skits, clearly communicated the importance of having a Guru in one's life. The audience, which included Balavihar parents and children above 5th grade, Swamiji and Mahadevanji were wowed by what they saw.

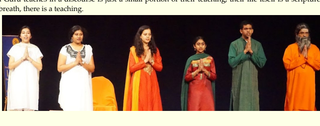
The 11th grade began the staging of the event, with a medley that depicted scenes from the life of King Janaka, and how he found and surrendered to his Guru Ashtavakra. The play showed that the supreme Self or Brahman is not apart from oneself- 'Tat Tvam Asi' - and there is no right place or right time to realize this truth.



The second performance by 12th grade Balavihar students included three hilarious mini skits. It showed different scenarios and situations in the lives of youngsters and how Swamiji's and Balavihar teachings help them deal with it effectively. They showed how a student can make responsible choices over impulsive ones, how to keep commitments and how character can be developed through Seva.



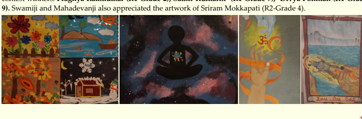
CHYKS concluded the event by taking everyone through a day in Gurudev's life. The play made the point that what a Guru teaches in a discourse is just a small portion of their teaching, their life itself is a scripture and in every breath, there is a teaching.



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Young Artists and Poets Interpret Gurudev's Names

CMLA hosted an art exhibition which invited all members, young and adult, to participate by submitting art work/poetry symbolizing the two names of Gurudev – 'Om Bhumne Namah' and 'Om Mahavakyopadeshakaya Namah.' The young Balavihar artists and poets had innocence mark their work along with interpretations that had us visualize "AUM" in every living being, in the seasons, and the vast expanse of the sky apart from recreating the popular human forms. The more mature interpretations had us admire the intricacies of artwork in addition to the deep reflection of the artist. Swamiji and Mahadevanji while appreciating and admiring all who had made submissions did the difficult but necessary task of picking the winners. All art renditions will be sent to CM Dallas-Fort Worth for the 2016 Mahasamadhi Camp. See below *(from left to right)* the works of contest winners: **Pragnya Ramkumar (R1-Grade 2), Samir Kulkarni (R1-Grade 7), Divya Ponniah (R1-Grade 9).** Swamiji and Mahadevanji also appreciated the artwork of Sriram Mokkapati (R2-Grade 4).



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CEEP's Tiny Tots Show Their Love

CMLA's littlest ones at CEEP were not far behind to avail of Gurudev's blessings. On Feb.26, kids ranging from 2 ½ to 5 years of age, dressed up in traditional Indian attire lined up and walked to the altar to pour their hearts out with love! They chanted shlokas, sang some beautiful bhajans and made offerings of fruits and flowers.



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SoCal Temple Visits: Spreading the Fragrance



Southern California in the weeks of Jan 31 to Feb 28 was suffused with the glorious fragrance of Pujya Gurudev Swami Chinmayananda. Several temples and cities in the area played host to the Chinmaya Jyoti and Guru Padukas with devotees and CMLA families joyfully and reverentially receiving them at the arrival of the Chinmaya Jyoti Vahana. Congregations participated in Guru Paduka Puja and heard from Swami Ishwarananda among other things about the importance and need of a Guru and got a glimpse of the magnificence of Gurudev's thoughts and Advaita Vedanta.

Sanatan Dharma Temple, Norwalk

Devotees stood along the entry of the Sanatan Dharma temple dressed in off-white colors chanting and solemnly welcoming the Jyoti brought in on a palanquin. To the chanting led by temple priests and those gathered, the Jyoti and Padukas were installed on a well decorated platform next to the deities of the temple. Heart touching musical offerings were made by Swamiji, "Guru Brahma Roop Jano"; Balavihar student Ananya Raghavan and Swaranjali. In his satsang to the over 100 people present, Swamiji pointed out that such occasions were to ensure we do not forget the original message of our Masters. He also urged all to remember that even as we perform our rituals in temples and homes, we must know that we should move beyond these initial steps and transcend all action to experience our True Nature. After the aarati and prasad distribution, circumambulation of the temple parikrama by the Jyoti and Padukas was done.



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Malibu Temple, Calabasas

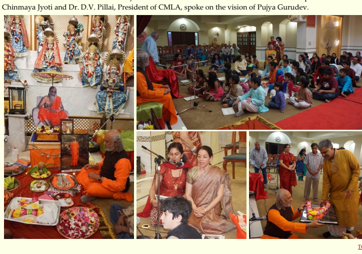
Feb. 7 was Superbowl, when millions are single pointed in their interest. But for the Aguora Balavihar families there was an even more important event - the visit of the Chinmaya Jyoti! When Swamiji arrived with the Jyoti and Guru Padukas at the Malibu temple, volunteers stepped forward to carry the toran and palanquin. Children and parents were lined along the path to accord a warm welcome with candles and flowers in their hands and the chant of "Om Sri Chinmaya Sadguruve Namah" on their lips. Once inside the temple, the Shruti group led the congregation in singing "Jaya Guru Omkara" and "Ananda Gurunath Ramana." Swamiji provided insight into Pujya Gurudev's great contributions and the purpose behind the Chinmaya Jyoti celebrations. The puja conducted by Swamiji concluded with the Chinmaya aarati and the distribution of prasad to all. The procession around the temple accompanied by music and children doing dandiya, was electrifying. Everyone present was unanimous in feeling that Superbowl or not, nothing could have surpassed being in the divine blessings of Gurudev Swami Chinmayananda and the joy of being part of the Chinmaya Jyoti celebrations.



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Valley Hindu Temple, Northridge

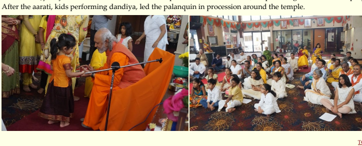
Children holding candles and chanting "Om Sri Chinmaya Sadgurave Namah," flanked the path as the Jyoti and Padukas were ushered in on a palanquin to the Valley Hindu temple on Feb. 7. Melodious bhajans filled the air as everyone readied for the Rama puja and the Paduka Puja wherein the temple hall reverberated with the sounds of the 108 names of Gurudev. Temple priest Prakash Pandya addressed everyone in Sanskrit and extended a warm welcome to Swamiji! Balavihar coordinator Madhu Sharma recited a poem in Hindi on Chinmaya Jyoti and Dr. D.V. Pillai, President of CMLA, spoke on the vision of Pujya Gurudev.



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Shri Lakshmi Narayan Mandir, Riverside

Redlands Balavihar and devotees of the Shri Lakshmi Narayan temple had a date with our beloved Gurudev on Valentines Day! After the ceremonial purnakhubham, Gurudev's palanquin was placed inside the temple. Head priest Pandit Dr. Shukavak Dasa addressed all present and spoke of the work of Gurudev. Shruthi kids with great devotion sang "Guru Brahma Roop Jaano" and "Ambe Devi Saraswati." Swamiji spoke about the idea behind the Jyoti yatra and shared a few of his experiences with Gurudev, emphasizing the need of inquiry. After the aarati, kids performing dandiya, led the palanquin in procession around the temple.



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Siddhivinayak Temple, Brea

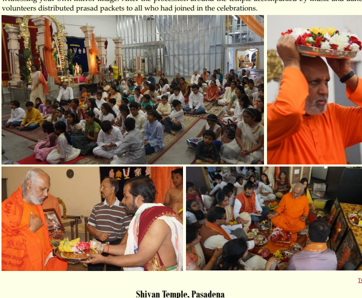
The Chinmaya Jyoti visited the Siddhivinayak temple on Feb.14. The Jyoti and Padukas were ushered inside the temple amidst chanting of "Om Sri Chinmaya Sadgurave Namah" by adorable kindergartners. After Swamiji had carefully set up Gurudev's altar and once the opening prayers were recited, the Balavihar children melodiously sang the Guru Stotram and a few bhajans. Other groups of children performed a beautiful dandiya for Pujya Gurudev. Swamiji and Mahadevanji gave speeches, which were well acknowledged by the audience. The high school seniors from the Yuva Kendra class led everyone in the Chinmaya pledge and aarati. Later, families performed the Paduka Puja which included the chanting of the glory of Gurudev with 108 names. The wonderful and meaningful event concluded with bhiksha.



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Sri Panchamukhi Hanuman Temple, Torrance

Young ones of the South Bay Balavihar lined the procession path, through which the Chinmaya Jyoti and Padukas were carried into the temple, carrying lamps and joining in the soulful chanting of the Guru Stotram and bhajans invoking Gurudev's glory. Gratitude to Pujya Gurudev was the marked sentiment during the conduct of the Paduka Puja. In his satsang, Swamiji spoke about Gurudev's contribution in spreading the Vedantic knowledge, his boundless enthusiasm, and his tireless journey to reach the masses. He urged the children to make positive contributions to society so that they may also be remembered on their own 100th birthday celebration! Swamiji also explained the role of religion and how seeing God's idol is actually similar to witnessing your own mirror image. After the procession around the temple accompanied by music and dance, volunteers distributed prasad packets to all who had joined in the celebrations.



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Shivan Temple, Pasadena

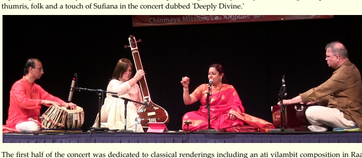
On a beautiful Saturday afternoon, at the Shivan Temple in Pasadena, the Chinmaya Jyoti and Padukas were received with great joy. The San Gabriel Balavihar children lined up on both sides of the procession with lamps and flowers as the Guru Stotram was chanted. The palanquin was carried on a red carpet inside the temple and placed in front of the sanctum sanctorum. After the Shiva puja was conducted by the temple priest, Acharya Mahadevan gave a brief talk. Swami Ishwarananda, in his talk, told the story of the Jyotirlinga linking it to the light in every individual and how the Chinmaya Jyoti represented Gurudev. All members of the SGBV Chinmaya family the together sang bhajan in praise of Lord Shiva and 'Jaya Gurudevam.' After the Chinmaya aarati, the palanquin was taken ceremonially around the temple with a colorful dandiya dance by the Balavihar children.



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Ramneek Kaur Concert Sets Meditative Mood

Chinmaya Kalanjali presented a specially designed concert as a conclusion to the jnana yagna, on Feb.27. A composer herself, the Toronto-based Kaur created and sang a bhajan, "Ab deeyo daan mohe devo Mahesh" especially for Chinmaya Mission in addition to presenting a variety of styles including fast paced taranas, thumris, folk and a touch of Sufiana in the concert dubbed 'Deeply Divine.'



The first half of the concert was dedicated to classical renderings including an ati vilambit composition in Raag Malkauns, fast tempo bandishes and compositions in Raag Darbari Kanada as popularized by Ustad Amir Khan Sahib of the Indore Gharana. The Shabad from the Guru Granth Sahib, "Mayee mero man bas nayee" was appreciated by all as was the Kabir bhajan, both of which kept the meditative mood going. Kaur also impressed with her thumri in Raag Kirwani, again written and composed by her. Her recital concluded with a Heer which she had also sing for the movie "The Midnight's Children."

Kaur's accompanists Hemant Ekbote on tabla, Vivek Dattar on harmonium and Jaeger Smith on tanpura added to the quality of the concert that was enjoyed by the over 200 people present.

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CMLA Members Accompany Chinmaya Jyoti to San Diego

After a month of celebrating, remembering and rededicating themselves to the vision and teachings of Pujya Gurudev, 75 CMLA members gathered in strength on the morning of Feb.28, to accompany the Chinmaya Jyoti to CM's San Diego center. While the Jyoti were taken in the special Chinmaya Vahana by Swamiji and Mahadevanji, 50 members boarded a bus chanting Gurudev's name and the Guru Stotram.

On arrival at the beautiful San Diego center set amidst eight acres of land, Lakshmiji and Sukumarji along with the entire membership and Balavihar children accorded a grand welcome to the Jyoti. After the Paduka Puja and the singing of lovely bhajans by children, Swamiji in his brief talk pointed out that Pujya Gurudev had attained samadhi in San Diego, which is why the center had been named San Diego Jyoti and now the Chinmaya Jyoti, representative of Gurudev himself, was to find a home here for a month. Swamiji in his advice to the adults and Balavihar children present, stressed that the path of learning and daily living needed to be lined by compassion and love.

At the conclusion, CM San Diego played delightful hosts, offering lunch prasad to all even while paying warm attention to the visitors from CMLA! CMLA members returned home with mixed emotions: the heart feeling the pang of separation from all that the Jyoti represented and yet feeling blessed to have felt Gurudev's presence for a whole month at Rameshwaram.



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Please send articles and pictures for publication to Nimmi Raj at nimmicmla@gmail.com
Many thanks for this issue to:
Patrika thanks all other volunteers who contributed to this issue with pictures, articles and coordination support.